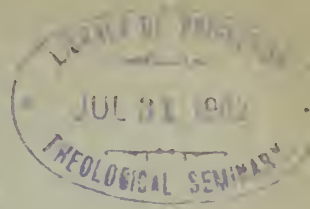


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CHRISTIAN MISSIONS.

BY

REV. JAMES S. DENNIS, D.D.,

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN
MISSION, BEIRUT, SYRIA.

Reprinted from The Missionary Review of the
World for August, 1889.

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NOTE BY THE EDITORS OF THE MISSIONARY REVIEW OF THE WORLD
(ACCOMPANYING THE ARTICLE AS PRINTED IN THE REVIEW).

WE are requested to withhold the name of the writer of this able and timely article. We regret the necessity, as the name would be sure to command a wide and considerate reading of it. Let it suffice to say, that the writer has long enjoyed the very best opportunities for studying the system discussed in the light of its historical development and results.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

IN view of the present attitude of the Moslem authorities in the Turkish Empire to Christian missions, and the strained relations between them and existing missionary agencies, and their watchful surveillance of even the foreign press to secure if possible the evidence which will enable them to make out a case against the American missionary and his work as inimical to the welfare of the Mohammedan state and injurious to the moral and religious prestige of Islam, it was thought by the writer to be the part of prudence to print this article in the "Missionary Review of the World" without announcing its source as from a resident missionary in Syria. It seems unwise needlessly to provoke and alarm a powerful antagonist, or unnecessarily to imperil a precious work which has been pushed to its present success by a large outlay in labor and expense. Nothing is to be gained by the formal and open proclamation on the part of the missionary in the East of the fact that Christianity is to overthrow Islam, or that this is the end he has in view. An announcement of this kind would place the missionary in what the Moslem would consider a pronounced attitude of enmity to both State and Church in the Ottoman Empire. It is rather the part of wisdom and fidelity for the ambassador of Christ to go on teaching and preaching the truth as his Master has given it to him, and let his Master take care of results. The results themselves will prove in time the sufficient proclamation of the mission of Christianity. It is requested, therefore, that so far as the public prints are concerned the writer's incognito should be carefully observed, and that even his connection with the missionary work in the East should not be referred to.

A few copies of the article have been struck off with his name upon the title page for private distribution among personal friends. He begs the attention of all who may receive this pamphlet to the subject discussed, with the earnest hope that the coming struggle between Islam and Christianity may find the Christian public awake to the serious and subtle issues involved in the conflict, and prepared to reject all muddled and bungling attempts at compromise with a view to placing Islam in sympathetic relations with biblical truth, and classing it as embryonic Christianity—an integral part of the divine religion God has given to man. Islam, although it has seized upon one great truth of revelation and holds it with others of lesser note as a noble captive caught in a wild foray into the spiritual desert of seventh century religion in Arabia, is as a religious system only and merely human, and needs be taught of God. It would be the most pitiable weakness and folly for the Church of Christ to sit down with Islam and attempt to recast and readjust the truths of God's Word to suit the inner consciousness of an Oriental constituency. Let it be the firm purpose and only aim of the Church to give the pure and saving gospel to the Moslem world as God opens the way in his own time.

Protestant missions in the Turkish Empire as yet have hardly assumed any aggressive attitude towards Moslems, nor have they undertaken directly and actively to carry on evangelistic work among them. Under existing circumstances this would be nothing less than a revolutionary movement of the most radical and dangerous character. In a more quiet and unnoticed way through the circulation of the Bible and religious books, tracts, and newspapers, and the education of Moslem children, and the establishment of Protestant churches free from the superstitions and idolatrous practices of Oriental Christianity, and the general impulse given to free thought and inquiry, a new spirit is being awakened among Moslems. A wide spread desire for light is abroad among them; secret convictions control many

hearts whose true attitude towards Christ and the Bible is not suspected; many are longing for religious liberty; many are praying for guidance and strength amidst overshadowing and appalling difficulties in the path of open and sincere confession. They are for the first time in their history beginning to see Christianity to advantage, and to recognize it in its pure and spiritual as distinguished from its apostate form.

This transforming and leavening process of thought in such a mighty and compact mass as Islam defies all attempt at description, and eludes all effort to formulate it in statistics. Everything in this region of indirect missionary work is tentative, intangible, preparatory; results are in a state of solution; spiritual forces are hiding in awakened hearts; conviction lies in ambush and bides its time; the silent prayer, the patient hope, the quiet hour with the Bible, the conscious thrill of a new found liberty of conscience—prudently concealed and carefully restrained as yet—perhaps the touch of faith upon the hem of Christ's garment in the case of some unnoticed ones in the surging throng, are the only signs of the presence of the living gospel. God is merciful to those who "wait for the morning" while yet unable to break altogether from their spiritual bondage. Many a soul sings its song of deliverance in the silence and seclusion of its own heart's sanctuary before the voice of the multitude can be heard around the shrine of a larger and wider national freedom.

America—where God has made the consciences of all men free—is to furnish, I firmly believe, a large part of the spiritual and intellectual forces which will secure, when God's time comes, the blessing of religious liberty to the Moslem world. God will work with other and sterner agencies, as history testifies; diplomacy does His bidding, and armies are His servants. But the preparation of a race for the appreciation and proper use of freedom, and the provision of the religious and educational facilities for the growth and culture of natures introduced into new regions of thought, and to fresh revelations of truth, and unfamiliar relations to the Deity, are spheres of service second to none which God can commission one nation to do for another. Let the Church of Christ be patient, as she can well afford to be. This sublime task will require a large outlay of sacrifice and labor, and may cost a struggle which will tax the faith and fortitude of Christianity. There are already abundant indications that Islam will make strenuous endeavors to maintain its ascendancy, and will resist vigorously every attempt which Christianity may make to break its ranks. Protestant mission work in the Turkish Empire is, and has been from the beginning, largely in the hands of American missionaries. Syria—and I may say the entire Turkish Empire—is the hottest fighting ground in the whole battle field of the Church militant. Islam, with its political and military supremacy, and Oriental Christianity with its vigilant and powerful hierarchy are in common antagonism to evangelical missions, which have entered the Orient as the champion of biblical truth and the advocate of liberal education. Into this historic field, which calls for a heroic measure of faith, patience, fortitude, and sacrifice, God has called our American churches to enter. The West, in its happy career of prosperity and progress, must not forget the East, whence came the sweetest and noblest forces of our social and religious life. There must be no Monroe doctrine in American Christianity bidding us hold aloof from the intellectual and spiritual struggles of the Oriental world. A clarion call speaking as never man spake, with an authority which none can question, comes to us out of the East with the dawn of Christian history—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." This is the earliest as it is the latest message of the skies to the followers of "His star in the East." This is the message of the hour.

With cordial and fraternal greetings,

ISLAM AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS.

HUMAN religions are compared in the Bible to "broken cisterns, that can hold no water." God is Himself the source of all true religion, and in contrast with "broken cisterns," in this same verse (Jer. ii: 13), is compared to a "Fountain of living waters." All human systems of religion are not only incapable of producing living water, but, like "broken cisterns," they will hold no water. They are not simply on a lower level of wisdom and power than the divine religion, but as religions they are failures, incapable of holding in any helpful and saving way even the modicum of truth which they may have in solution, and wholly unable to provide the soul of man with the living water which will quench his thirst.

Our subject invites our attention to a religious faith which, although it may be classed as a "broken cistern," has had a marvelous history, and to-day dominates the minds and hearts of millions of our fellow-men in the Orient. We mean Islam, or the religion of Mohammed. Here the thought will perhaps occur to many, Is it not taking too much for granted to rank Mohammedanism among merely human religions? It has been the faith of a vast number of our fellow-men, who have been singularly loyal and intense in their devotion to it, and has held its own with extraordinary tenacity, while its central truth has ever been the acknowledgment of God's existence and supremacy. This is all true, and Islam must have the credit of it. There is probably no religion, not confessedly based upon the facts recorded in the Bible, which has such a satisfying element of truth in its creed and presents such a conception of a personal and supreme God as Islam. As compared with idolatry it is an immeasurably nobler form of worship. As contrasted with the metaphysical vagaries of other Oriental religions it is doctrinally helpful. It is, however, simply the old monotheism of the ancient Jewish religion projected into the Christian ages with the divine environment of Judaism left out and a human environment substituted. "There is no God but God," was the creed

of the Jew long before the Moslem proclaimed it. Mohammed and his followers adopted it, apparently in utter unconsciousness, or rather in supercilious rejection of its historic environment under the Jewish dispensation, and brought it into line as the leading truth of a human scheme of religion. They rejected its historic development in the Incarnation, acknowledged Christ simply as one of the prophets, supplemented and in almost every respect superseded Him by another, and making Mohammed the central personality, they established the Mohammedan religion as the latest and best revelation from heaven—a religion whose right it was to reign, and whose prerogative it was to supplant and annihilate every other religion, and especially Christianity.

We cannot undertake in the limits of this article to bring forward the evidences that Mohammedanism as a spiritual system must be considered a "broken cistern," nor can we undertake to present the evidence furnished by the present state of the Moslem world, that as a religion it is futile and powerless as an uplifting agency. It would absorb too much of our space, and lead us away from the main purpose we have in view. We must be content to rest the verdict as to its alien birth and false credentials upon one single consideration, which for our purposes at the present time should be sufficient to carry conviction. "What think ye of Christ?" is here, as elsewhere, a test question. The Mohammedan religion, while acknowledging Christ as one of the prophets, yet denies that he is anything more than one of the prophets. His unique position as God in the flesh—the Messiah of prophecy, the Redeemer of men, the heaven-sent Mediator, the divinely-appointed victim of an atoning sacrifice, the Prophet, Priest and King of a redeemed Israel, the risen Lord and the ascended Intercessor, the only name given among men, is boldly and defiantly denied and repudiated by the Moslem. The office, and work, and dignity of the Holy Spirit are also rejected. In place of the divine Christ and the life-giving Holy Spirit, we have a conception of God which is but an imperfect and misleading reproduction of the earliest Jewish idea, and is cold and bald and stern, without the tenderness of fatherhood or the sweet ministries of pity—for, after all, divine mercy in the view of the Moslem is quite as much of the nature of a deserved reward as of a compassionate ministry; it is a reproduction, through a purely human channel, in an environment of ignorance, of the earliest revelation of a Supreme Being. This distorted reflection of the primitive teachings of religion about the Deity is still further marred and shadowed by making Mohammed His greatest prophet and the Koran His final and consummate revelation to man. The result as compared with Christianity is a notable failure on a merely human plane of religious thought, yet with enough of the light of heaven borrowed and misused to deceive the conscience and lead an ignorant Oriental constituency to accept it

as a revelation from heaven, and Mohammed as a prophet sent of God. An intelligent Christian faith can pronounce but one judgment upon this question. After recognizing every element of truth which Islam has borrowed from Judaism or Christianity, it must pronounce it lacking in the essentials of saving religion as we find them in God's Word. What is included in Moslem doctrine is valuable, but what is *not* there is essential. The modicum of truth is lost in the maximum of error. A counterfeit coin may have some grains of pure metal in it, but its entire make-up is none the less a deception, and it must be condemned. So Mohammedanism must be condemned, not because it does not contain any truth, but because the truth is so mixed with superabounding alloy that in the combination it has lost its virtue and has become simply an ingredient of a compound which, on the whole, must be regarded as false metal. One truth mixed in with twenty errors will not make a resultant of truth, especially if the twenty errors are in direct opposition to other truths as essential as the one included. If we extend our survey over the whole field of Moslem doctrine and practice the conviction becomes irresistible that its moral influence in the world has been harmful, and its spiritual results have brought to man nothing higher than formalism and self-righteousness. Satan is represented as sometimes "transformed into an angel of light." Islam, as a religious system, may be regarded as playing the part of "an angel of light" among the religions of the world.

Mohammedanism is a profound theme, and one which has occupied the minds of many accomplished scholars. It has been the subject of much patient research and careful thought by some of the greatest students of history. Dr. Johnson once remarked that "there are two objects of curiosity—the Christian world and the Mohammedan world; all the rest may be considered as barbarous." The subject is worthy of a careful examination, both for its own sake as one of the enigmas of religious history, and also to prepare our minds for an intelligent understanding of the amazing task to which God is leading the church, viz.: the conversion of the Moslem world to Christianity. The duty of Christianity to Mohammedanism, the enormous difficulties in the way of discharging it, the historic grandeur of the conflict, the way in which the honor of Christ is involved in the result, and the brilliant issues of victory all combine to make this problem of the true relation of Christian missions to Islam one of the most fascinating and momentous themes which the great missionary movement of the present century has brought to the attention of the Christian church. The number of Moslems in the world is given in the latest statistical tables as 200,000,000. This is possibly too high an estimate, but we may safely fix the figure at not less than 180,000,000. They are chiefly in Western Asia, India, and Africa, with a few in Southeastern Europe. It may be roughly estimated that the total

number of those who have lived and died in the Moslem faith since its establishment is over 6,000,000,000—a number equivalent to nearly five times the present population of the globe. Of this vast number a large proportion have, of course, died in infancy. We are dealing, therefore, with the religious faith of about one-seventh of the human race. It cannot be regarded as a stagnant and effete religion, unaggressive in spirit and powerless to inspire devotion and sacrifice. It is to-day probably the most pushing, aggressive, and formidable foe to Christianity on foreign mission ground. It is historically true, I think, that never has Christianity been called upon to face a more thoroughly equipped and a more desperately determined foe than Islam; never has our heaven-sent gospel received a more defiant challenge than that given it by the religion of Mohammed.

The time has come for the Church of Christ seriously to consider her duty to this large fraction of our race. It is not to be supposed that a church guided and inspired by an Almighty Leader will neglect a duty simply because it is difficult and calls for faith and fortitude. It is especially foreign to the spirit of American Christianity to slight a task because it is hard, or ignore a question of moral reform or religious responsibility because it looks formidable. Let us endeavor, then, calmly to consider the duty of Christian missions to the Moslems. Is there a duty of this kind? If so, what special difficulties must be overcome in order to its successful accomplishment; what should be our aim; and what is the spirit which should inspire and govern us in the proper discharge of it?

The duty seems plain—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The gospel of Christ, not of Mohammed—to *every* creature, because all need the gospel. If there were a possibility of a human substitute for the gospel, we might consider it an open question whether salvation is of Mohammed; but Christ has taught us one way of salvation for all men, and that way is through Him—through the merits of His sacrifice, and not through works or worthiness in man. I would not be understood as implying here that every Moslem is necessarily lost. If he despises and rejects Christ, and puts his sole trust in Mohammed, or even trusts in divine mercy because that mercy is his due as a Moslem, I should not feel that there was a substantial basis of hope for him. He is looking to a human saviour, or he is simply claiming the divine mercy as a subsidy to the Moslem religion. I can conceive, however, of a Mohammedan while formally adhering to his religion, in reality taking such an attitude of heart to Christ that he may receive mercy and pardon for Christ's sake, though he is not openly enrolled on the side of Christ. God alone can judge and pronounce when a soul takes that attitude of humility and faith towards His Son, or where His Son is not known, towards His infinite mercy, which will open the way for Him to apply the merits of

Christ's atonement to the salvation of the soul. Where Christ is known and recognized we have no margin of hope outside of a full and conscious acceptance of Him. In proportion as God has left the souls of men in ignorance and darkness about Christ, in that proportion may we enlarge the margin of hope that His infinite mercy will find the way to respond to conscious penitence and humble trust by freely granting and applying the boundless merits of Christ's sacrifice to a soul truly seeking after Him. We understand the Bible to teach that all opportunity of accepting the gospel is limited to life this side of the grave, and that there is no probation or renewed opportunity beyond our earthly existence. It is also clearly taught in the Bible that salvation is not of works nor of external adherence to any sect. The Jew was not saved because he was a Jew. The Christian is not saved because he is a Christian. The Moslem, of course, cannot be saved because he is a Moslem. All who may be saved outside of formal and visible connection with Christianity, will be saved because of a real and invisible connection with Christ. They will have obtained consciously, or unconsciously, by the aid of God's Spirit, that attitude of humility and trust toward God which will make it consistent with His character and in harmony with His wisdom and goodness to impart to their souls the free gift of pardon through Christ's merits, and apply to them in the gladness of His love the benefits of Christ's death. It is in any case salvation by gift, received from God's mercy, and based upon Christ's atonement, and not by works or by reason of human merit. We claim, therefore, that the Mohammedan, as such, needs the knowledge of Christ, and can only be saved through Christ. He needs to be taught Christianity and brought into the light of Bible truth. He needs to recognize the dangerous errors of his religion and turn to Christianity as the true light from heaven. He needs to take a radically different and essentially new attitude towards Christ. He needs spiritual regeneration and moral reformation. In one word, he needs the gospel. He needs all its lessons, and all its help, and all its inspiration. Here we rest the question of duty. If any class of men need the gospel, to them it should be given, and it is our mission in the world as Christians to do this.

Let us turn now to consider the special difficulties of mission work among Moslems. That there are serious and formidable difficulties is not simply the verdict of the literary student or the historical theologian, but it is a matter of experience. All missionaries in Moslem communities recognize this, and there is hardly a problem in the whole range of mission service which is a severer tax upon faith and courage and wisdom than that involved in the effort to win converts to Christianity from Islam. It is necessary to a full understanding of this phase of our subject that we should secure if possible an inside view of the strength and resources of the Mohammedan faith. Let us en-

deavor to take the measure of our foe. Let us ask whence the power and prestige and influence of Islam. What is its secret of success? What makes it a force which so easily dominates the religious life of so many millions? What gives it its aggressive push and its staying power? It is comparatively easy to show the immense inferiority of Islam to Christianity in the essential points of true religion, especially those of practical morality. It is, however, for this very reason all the more difficult to give a satisfactory explanation of its successes, and show why Christianity is so slow in coping with it effectively. Islam has arisen, within the pale, so to speak, of Christianity. It has overrun and held ground which is historically Christian. Its great conflict has been largely with Christianity. It now occupies regions which were the scene of the earliest triumphs of the Christian church. Christianity, to be sure, has held its own in a marvelous way in the ancient Oriental Christian sects which have held to their Christian faith in the very centres of the Moslem domination. Their influence, however, has been simply negative. The part they have played has been that of resistance and stubborn adherence to the external symbols of Christianity. They have never succeeded, for good reasons, in impressing the Moslem with the superiority of the Christian religion. We must not fail, however, to give them the credit they deserve, and to recognize God's wonderful providence in preserving them to be the medium of introducing through Protestant missionary effort a pure and spiritual form of Christianity into the very heart of the Moslem world.

The question recurs to us—Whence the success of Islam? We mean its success, not as a saving religion, but in winning and holding its devotees in the very presence of the Christian centuries. There are some considerations which throw light upon this point, and if we give them a few moments of patient attention they may help to lift the burden of this great mystery, and at the same time will bring to our attention more clearly the full meaning of the task we have before us in conquering Islam for Christ with the spiritual weapons of the gospel. It is not my purpose, and it is, moreover, clearly impossible to attempt here any full or critical survey of Mohammedanism. This would require a volume, and the gifts and learning of the careful student of Oriental history. What I have to offer, however, towards the solution of the problem of Mohammedan success will be the result of a patient study of the subject in connection with unusual opportunities for personal observation of the intellectual, social and religious life of Moslems.

Islam is a living power—a strong and vigorous moral force among Orientals for several reasons, and with all of these Christianity must reckon if she is to win her way. We will name them in order :

I. In its origin, and also in its subsequent history, Mohammedanism represents *the spirit of reform working under the inspiration of a great truth*. Mohammed appears upon the stage of history as a

religious reformer. In the early period of his career he was influenced no doubt by sincere motives. His purpose was to inaugurate a religious revolution—a revolt against the idolatry which prevailed in Arabia. The heathenism of his day was gross idolatry; and the Christianity of that age in the Orient was little better in its superstitious and idolatrous practices. It was the era of the iconoclast even within the circle of professed Christianity. It was the purpose of Mohammed to re-establish among men a spiritual worship of the one God—to demolish forever the Arabian Pantheon. The unity and spirituality of the Supreme Being were basis ideas in his religious creed, and he advocated direct communion with God in prayer and worship, and the utter rejection of idolatry, which in his age was equivalent to polytheism. This movement was certainly a remarkable one when we consider the times and the environment out of which it sprung. Had it been inspired and guided by the Spirit of God, and founded upon the revealed Word, with a divinely called and sanctified leader, we might have seen the great reformation of the sixteenth century anticipated in the seventh.

The power and prestige of Mohammed were due to the fact that men soon believed him to be a prophet sent of God, and his message was to such an extent in the name and to the honor of God that his commission seemed to be genuine. In an age of abject superstition and driveling idolatry he announced with the prophetic fervor of conviction that great truth which has ever had the power to arrest the attention of earnest minds, namely: the existence of one only and true God, supreme in His will and absolute in His power. With the music of this eternal truth Mohammed has held the attention of a large portion of the Eastern world for over twelve hundred years. This one message has seemed to guarantee him as a prophet to his misguided and indiscriminating followers. Having given bonds, as it were, of such overwhelming value in this one supreme truth, men have not been careful to scrutinize in other respects his credentials; with the charm and majesty of this one great central idea of all religion, he has swept all before him. This, in connection with the success of his arms, as his followers carried on in his name their successful aggressive warfare, has been his passport to the front rank of religious leadership; and although he hopelessly forfeited his position by the most manifest signs of moral weakness and human ignorance, yet the clarion call of “No God but God!” has held the ear of the East with a constancy at once marvelous and pathetic. It was considered in no wise to his discredit that he taught what is practically a plan of salvation by works based upon external allegiance to a religious creed, and it rather added to his popularity with his Oriental following that his religion officially sanctioned polygamy, slavery, and unlimited divorce.

The Prophet of Mecca, however, was simply a religious enthusiast

with a tendency to mysticism—a man of visions and dreams—with a sensitive and imaginative temperament and a disordered physical system, and a nature swayed by passions and lacking in moral stamina, who became deeply impressed with the Jewish conception of one spiritual God, and conceived himself a prophet of monotheistic reform amidst the abounding follies of idolatry. Under the influence, no doubt, of sincere conviction, he began to teach and proclaim the religious ideas which had lodged in his mind from all sources—Jewish and Christian and heathen—and shaped them into the rude consistency of the Moslem code. He can hardly be considered the originator of the religious reform he advocated. He was rather the exponent of a spirit of reformation which seems to have been in the air at that time. The movement at first did not seem to imply more than a purely religious purpose. It was not until the exigencies of his success led him to adopt methods of expediency and worldly policy that Mohammed became the political schemer and the ambitious leader of a military movement.

II. Mohammedanism was established and propagated by the agency of two of the most energetic and commanding forces of human history—the *power of moral conviction and the power of the sword*. In addition it at once threw its mantle of protection and loyalty over every adherent, and acknowledged him as a member of a Moslem brotherhood in which all are equal, and all can expect and claim the help and protection of all others. Islam is a religious caste—so much so that in India, the land of castes, it exists and wins its converts from the people of India without any disturbance or shock to the claims and exactions of the spirit of caste. It is an immense religious monopoly—a gigantic spiritual corporation whose celestial capital is of unknown proportions—a stupendous combination for the exclusive handling of the commodities of Paradise. It is an actual “Brotherhood” of Moslems, a social, political and religious “Union” of knights of the turban. With the exception that the Sunnites repudiate the Shiites as heretics, and the latter return the compliment, every Moslem befriends and respects every other Moslem because of the religious affinity which exists between them. This striking feature of the Moslem religion is to-day one of the most powerful forces to hold Mohammedanism together throughout the world.

III. Islam has never known or seen Christianity except *in its corrupt and semi-idolatrous forms*. This is a damage to Christianity—a gain to Islam. Mohammedanism is thus enabled to appear in the role of a spiritual religion inviting to direct communion with the Deity, scorning the fiction of a human priesthood as in any sense a necessary instrument of mediation between God and the soul, and rebuking idolatry in all its forms. On the other hand, the corrupt Christianity of the East seems to be deeply imbued with the spirit of idolatry, overloaded with superstitious practices, and weighted with the enormous

assumptions of the Oriental priesthood. This was, and is still, an element of weakness to Christianity and of strength to Islam. It reduces the spiritual energy and convincing power of Christianity to a minimum, and gives to Islam a vigor and assurance and a direct hold upon the religious nature which it could not have had in the presence of a purer form of Christianity. Could Islam have subdued a Christianity filled with the spiritual power of the Reformation? Could it gain its historic victories over the form of Christianity found in our American churches? Most assuredly not! The power of a living Christ is more than a match for Islam in any age of the world and among any class of people. There is no hope that the Moslem will ever be converted to Christianity as we see it in the Greek and Papal churches of the Orient. There is an ever brightening hope that a purer and more spiritual form of Christianity may carry conviction. We are sure, in fact, that God will never use any other agency than the gospel in its purity as an instrument for the conversion of the Moslem world. It is with this conviction that Protestant missions in the Orient have been laboring ever since their entrance into the field to establish a pure Christianity in the East, that a regenerated Christianity may be ready to carry conviction to hearts hitherto shut and barred against the entrance of the truth. It will be an immense gain to Christianity as a religion, in the eyes of the Moslem, not to be encumbered with the odium of image and picture worship as we see it in the Oriental churches. It is at present a part of a Moslem's religion to despise every form of Christianity with which he has come in contact. It is only as he becomes familiar with Protestant forms of worship and thought and life that he begins to realize that there is not necessarily an idolatrous element and a human priesthood associated with it.

IV. Islam has all the advantage which there is in *the magnetic power of personal leadership*. Christianity has Christ. Islam has Mohammed. Such a comparison may startle and half offend Christian sensibilities, but it may be unwelcome to the Moslem for a reason precisely opposite. Mohammed is regarded as an inspired man and a divinely sent prophet and the supreme historical personality in the religion he founded. There is a magnetic charm about the prophet of Islam which thrills the whole Moslem world. They believe in him and are ready at any sacrifice to uphold the honor of his name. Would that the nominal Christian world—we do not refer here to the inner circle of Christ's loving followers—were as visibly and unreservedly loyal to the honor and dignity of Christ's name as Islam is to that of her prophet. Imagine the city of New York thrown into a state of dangerous excitement because some one down at the Battery had cursed the name of Jesus Christ. In any Eastern city where Moslems reside the improper or contemptuous use of the name of Mohammed in public would produce an uproar and possibly lead to violence and

bloodshed. To be sure, we must recognize in this connection the difference between the conservatism of civilization and the fanaticism of Eastern devotees ; yet the fact remains that there is a public and prevailing respect for the name of Mohammed in the Moslem world which indicates the commanding power of his personality among his followers.

V. Islam proposes *easy terms of salvation and easy dealings with sin, and is full of large license and attractive promise to the lower sensuous nature*. The shibboleth of "No God but God" is the password to the skies. Salvation is simply the provision of mercy on God's part for all true Moslems. It is mercy shown because of works done and as a reward for loyalty. If that loyalty is crowned by martyrdom, then martyrdom in its turn is crowned by exceptional rewards. Holiness as an element of God's character and man's religious life is a very vague and shadowy matter to the Moslem, and the same may be said of his view of the nature of sin. This is, however, quite consistent with the fact that Islam for conscience sake insists on many of the great truths of religion such as faith and prayer, God's absolute sovereignty, man's moral accountability, a coming judgment, and a future state both of happiness and retribution, and meanwhile maintains a formal but very indifferent ethical and religious code which it strives to enforce. It is true, nevertheless, that regeneration and moral reformation—the becoming of a "new creature," as the Scriptures express it, is not a doctrine or a practical outcome of the Moslem religion. Regeneration is not a password to the Mohammedan heaven. "Ye must be born again" is not an essential of his creed. Transformation of character is to him simply a metaphysical fiction, and legal justification by the merits of Christ is an absurdity. Hawthorne's charming literary fiction of a celestial railway is a suggestive illustration of the Moslem theory of salvation. Every good Mohammedan has a perpetual free pass over that line which not only secures to him personally a safe transportation to Paradise, but provides for him upon his arrival there so luxuriously that he can leave all the superfluous impedimenta of his earthly harem behind him and begin his celestial career with an entirely new outfit.

We express no astonishment that Mohammed did not teach these high mysteries of religion, nor do we charge him with any deliberate purpose to deceive and play the part of an imposter ; we simply point to the absence of these unique and essential features of revealed truth as an evidence that his scheme of religion, and his method of salvation, are merely human conceptions, and that his soul was not taught of God in the things of the kingdom. The light which shone around him was a broken and darkened reflection of divine revelation, which he proceeded to focus as best he could with the lens of human

reason. He brought the scattered rays to the burning point in his doctrine of "one God," but the result was God *and* Mohammed—not the eternal truth revealed in its true setting by the inspired guidance of the Divine Spirit, but distorted by the unguided presumption of the human medium.

VI. Islam comes into conflict with the doctrinal teachings of Christianity *just at those points where reason has its best vantage ground in opposition to faith.* The doctrines which Islam most strenuously opposes and repudiates in Christianity are confessedly the most profound mysteries of the faith. They are the great problems over which Christianity herself has ever pondered with amazement and awe and with reference to which there has been the keenest discussion and the largest reserve, even within the ranks of professed believers. The Incarnation, the Divinity of Christ, the Trinity, are all stumbling blocks to the Moslem and are looked upon rather in the light of ridiculous enigmas than sober truths. The doctrine of the Cross, the whole conception of atonement, is to his mind a needless vagary. Divine mercy, in his view, is ample enough and can act freely and promptly in the case of all Moslems without the mysterious mediation of a vicarious sacrifice. That the Incarnate Christ should die upon the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of men is to his mind an absurdity which borders upon blasphemy. It is in vain you attempt to solve these mysteries by a refined theory of Christ's exalted personality with its two natures in one person. It is to his mind simply unfathomable, and he dismisses the whole subject of Christ's unique position and work as taught in the Bible with a feeling of impatience as only one of many Christian superstitions. We think it was John Bunyan who once said when he saw a criminal led to execution: "There, but for the grace of God, goes John Bunyan." As we think of this attitude of the Moslem towards the mysteries of the Christian faith, and measure the capacity of our own unaided reason to deal with such themes as these, who of us is not ready to exclaim: "This is probably just the attitude which my own darkened and finite reason would take were it not for the guidance of God's revealed Word?" These mysteries of the Trinity, of God in the flesh, and of Christ upon the Cross are the most amazing revelations of the Infinite to the finite mind, and it is only as faith aids and supports reason that they will be trustfully, joyfully and gratefully received. The Moslem objects also to Christian morality, and regards it as an impracticable ideal which he never found exemplified in all the Christianity he ever knew anything about. Unfortunately, the ethical standards and the constant practice of a large part of the Christian laity and the Christian priesthood of all ranks in the Orient is a sad confirmation of his theory that Christianity is a shabby piece of hypocrisy—impossible in doctrine and in practice a shallow sham.

Let us pause for a moment in review and quietly take the measure of this foe. Remember that Islam in its origin and in its subsequent contact with Christianity, was the spirit of reformation inspired by high enthusiasm grasping a great religious truth and contending for it in the face of soul-degrading and soul destroying idolatry. I verily believe, if you and I had lived in those times amidst the dark idolatry of Arabia and had possessed the conviction and the courage we would have sprung to the banner of Mohammed, and would have been thrilled with the thought that there was no God but God, and probably we should have been captivated with the idea that Mohammed was a leader sent of God. The unity and supremacy of God is to-day the central truth of the Moslem's creed, in the recognition of which he subdues his soul and prostrates his body, and with a feeling of profound conviction says: "La ilah illa Ullah!" Remember again the fiery energy of the Moslem and the marvelous successes of his arms and his practical recognition of religious brotherhood. Remember, again, that he has never been familiar with anything but a corrupt and scandalous Christianity. Remember the charm and power of that historic personality of the Prophet of Islam. Remember its offer of immediate access to God and a free and exclusive salvation to all loyal adherents. Remember its liberal margin for human faults and passions and the fact that it lays no violent hands upon sins of the flesh. Remember the Paradise it pictures to the sensuous Oriental imagination. Remember that it makes its issue with Christianity and puts forward its assumptions of superiority just at those points where the weak and finite reason of man is most inclined to falter and yield, and where Christianity advances truths which only a God-taught faith can receive and grasp, and which have always been attacked with equal vehemence by human philosophy and rationalistic criticism. Remember, moreover, that Islam has always regarded Christianity as cowed and defeated, and that Reformed Christianity, with its spiritual weapons and its resources of grace and its heavenly alliances, has never fairly grappled with Mohammedanism, and that every energy of both state and church will be in array to prevent the very entrance of Christianity into the field, and will seek to hold the Moslem world intact by every resource of irresponsible power. If we bear in mind also that in the Turkish Empire at least every defection from the Moslem ranks is looked upon in the same light as a desertion from the army, we can form some conception of the gigantic task and the heroic opportunity God is preparing in the near future for the Christian church. Christianity in her historic childhood was called upon to contend with the colossal power of the heathen Roman Empire. She was victorious, although her resources were limited and her opponent was, to all human judgment, unconquerable. Let her not think now in her splendid maturity, with her imperial resources, her heavenly Leader, her gracious

mission, and with the crying needs and the pressing problems and the deepening conflicts of this nineteenth century challenging her attention, that her warfare is accomplished and she can disband her forces. Islam and all else arrayed in opposition must first give place to Christianity. Our Lord is even now leading His church to this battle ground of sublime privilege and high responsibility. His leadership is our inspiration, His promises our hope, His power our trust, His glory and supremacy our aim and the only possible outcome of the contest.

Christian missions, as related to Mohammedanism and the missionary activity of Islam are just now live themes among readers of our current literature in Europe and America. A prolonged and vigorous debate has arisen in the periodicals of our day, and more especially in Church of England circles, upon this subject, arising from a paper presented by Canon Taylor at the Church of England Congress in 1887. His exaggerated statements of the present progress of Islam have been fully answered by Sir William Hunter. We shall discuss here only his ideal views of Islam as a religion. The whole field is now being searched and discussed by both the friends and critics of missions. Aside from the literary and historic interest which Oriental students would find in the discussion, the whole subject of the propriety, necessity and usefulness of Christian missions to Moslems has come to the front in the debate. It is a matter which under present conditions fairly challenges the attention of Christendom, and as our American Congregational and Presbyterian churches have important and very successful missions in the Turkish Empire, the stronghold of the Moslem faith, it is a subject of interest also to American Christianity. Our American churches have at present a constituency of 70,000 Protestant adherents to their mission churches in the Turkish Empire, including Syria and Egypt. Of this number 15,200 are upon the roll of church membership, and additions to the church at present are at the rate of about 1,500 every year. There are six American colleges in the empire with 1,200 students, and 700 mission schools with 40,000 pupils. The Bible has been translated by American missionaries into every prominent language of the empire, and tens of thousands of copies are annually sold. The mission presses in Turkey, including Syria, print not less than 40,000,000 of pages of religious and educational literature every year, including over 20,000,000 of pages of the Word of God. These converts of whom I have spoken are not, however, from the Moslems—they are from the Oriental Christian churches, among which a reformation work is going on and a purer form of Christianity is being established. There are converts from Islam to Christianity in India and in Egypt, but Moslem converts in any numbers cannot openly at least be won as yet within the limits of the Turkish Empire, for the government will not allow the effort to be made; nor is a Mos-

lem's life safe for an hour (except perhaps in Egypt) if he openly becomes a Christian. It is hard to convince when conviction means death ; it is hardly possible to cultivate the spirit of martyrdom before conviction. The Turkish government, just at present, is in a state of very lively suspicion with reference to this growing and expanding work of American missionaries. The Turkish authorities, from the Sultan downwards, are beginning to feel that Islam has more to fear from the quiet growth and the expanding influence of missionary institutions than from any other opposing force. They find themselves suddenly confronted with churches, colleges, schools, hospitals, Bibles in the vernacular, and presses from which flow such a stream of permanent and periodical literature that they are fairly bewildered, and lament the day that missionary agencies were admitted to the empire. It will, no doubt, become more and more evident that God's purpose contemplates not simply the reformation of Oriental Christianity, but the establishment of a basis of operations for that far more inspiring and formidable task of which I forbear to speak here in any further detail.

The paper of Canon Taylor, as coming from a Christian clergyman, was remarkable for its exaltation of Mohammedanism, and in his subsequent articles, published chiefly in the *Fortnightly Review*, he has shown scant courtesy to missions which he has caricatured and misrepresented. The main points of his position in the paper on Mohammedanism may be briefly stated as follows : He contends that Islam demands the consideration and esteem of the Christian church, since it is in essence an imperfect or undeveloped Christianity, and may be regarded as preparatory to an advanced Christian faith. It must, in his opinion, be looked upon as a religious position half way between Judaism and Christianity, and being more cosmopolitan and less exclusive than Judaism, and missionary in its activities, it helps on in the general direction of Christianity wherever it wins converts from heathen communities. In fact, it must be considered, according to his judgment, as an advanced guard of Christian missions—not antagonistic to the gospel, but fighting at the outposts the same battle against heathenism with weapons on the whole rather better and more effective than those wielded by Christianity. He contends that it leads men from the darkness and degradation of pure heathenism, with its superstitions and cruelties, to an intelligent conception of one God, and gives them a simple and comprehensive view of His attributes and dealings with men, and the duties He requires of them. It leads them, moreover, into an attitude of human brotherhood with their fellow-men, and brings them into league with each other under the inspiration of a common religious faith. He contends that Islam contains and teaches all the morality that heathen and barbarous nations could be expected to receive and practice. It represents what he regards as

the high-water mark of practical morality and intelligible doctrine among Oriental nations, and as such should be supported and encouraged by Christianity, hoping for better things further on. Islam, in his opinion, is divine as far as it goes; it is at once a successful illustration and a happy outcome of the law of expediency, representing an imperfect possibility, which is better practically than an impossible ideal. In view of these considerations he advocates that Christianity should join hands with Islam and establish a *modus vivendi* on the basis of mutual concession and recognition.

This is an attractive position with a large class of minds who are willing to rank the gospel as only one of a dozen religions. With them the divine origin of Christianity, its exclusive claims, its unique glories, its adaptation and efficacy as the only religion which saves, are still open questions. What religion should be taught to men becomes, therefore, a mere question of expediency and availability. An effective accommodation in the light of human wisdom is with them as serviceable in religion as in anything else. The gospel may, therefore, be manipulated into a compromise with any other religion if it is a workable scheme.

To this it may be replied, why does not this general plan which Canon Taylor advocates with reference to Islam hold also with reference to the relations of Christianity to Judaism, or of Protestantism to the Papacy, and more especially to the Greek and Armenian churches? Why does it not apply in theory to the relations of Christianity to all religions of the East? It should be noted here that Canon Taylor seems to regard all reformation of existing Christianity in the Orient, and even throughout the world, as a needless and wasteful expenditure of money and labor, as he speaks with great disparagement of all attempts to "proselyte" from the Oriental Christian churches. He would apparently leave apostate Christianity in its decay and degradation, and extend the hand of brotherhood even to Islam. We must pause to ask here—would Christ approve? Would the Bible sanction? The simple answer may be given in the words of Paul, "If I or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that which I have preached to you, let him be accursed." God has given us the gospel; it is the duty of the church to preach and teach the religion of Christ and no other. It is a mistake to regard Christianity as an impossible ideal, nor can we consider Islam as a step towards Christianity. It is rather an attitude of pronounced opposition to Christianity, and not to Christianity only, but to civilization and to all social and intellectual and spiritual progress.

It is, however, the part both of wisdom and courtesy to give to Islam all the credit it deserves; to acknowledge its influence in the world as an anti-heathen reform; to place it high in the scale of historic failures on the part of human wisdom to establish a religion to

supersede the gospel; to acknowledge its skillful adaptation to an Oriental constituency; to recognize the truth which it contains and the natural basis which it affords for a work of supernatural grace and spiritual enlightenment through the revealed Word applied by the Spirit; to recognize every excellence of personal character which may be found in individual Moslems of the more serious and devout type. No one can do all this more easily than a Christian missionary living in Moslem lands. When, however, it comes to the question of his duty and responsibility as a religious teacher, every consideration of loyalty and high obligation requires him to teach only the gospel of his Divine Master. This is his supreme privilege, his sublime mission, and his inexorable task. No Christian missionary is sent to the Moslem world to establish a treaty of peace with Islam. He is sent there to carry the gospel of salvation to the perishing Moslem. He is God's messenger to a deluded people. The preaching of the Cross, which, of course, is an offense to the Moslem as it was to Jew and Gentile of old, is the very business which brings him there. He must endeavor to accomplish this delicate mission with tact and wisdom, and must be patient and courteous and courageous; but he has not the slightest authority from God or man to depart from his instructions or enter into any questionable compromises. He is an ambassador of the Cross, not an apologist for the Crescent.

The question of method is, no doubt, a pressing one, and upon this point Christian missionaries all over the world are seeking guidance and would be grateful for light. One thing, however, is certain: no method can be tolerated which lowers the standards of the gospel, or compromises its truths, or places a human religion on the same plane with the one divine religion; nor would such a method be fruitful in any results of solid or permanent value.

This is most assuredly the spirit of all our American missionaries in the Orient. They look to the Christian churches at home to sustain and encourage them in this theory of Christian missions to Mohammedans. They hope for the sympathy and prayers of Christ's people as they endeavor to work on upon these lines. It is time for the Christian public of America to be intelligently and profoundly interested in the religious development of Oriental nations, and especially in the problem of the relation of Christianity to Islam and the duty of the church of Christ to Moslems. Let us study this question in the light of history and with a living sympathy in the welfare of 200,000,000 of our race. Consider the desperate nature of the undertaking, and how the honor of Christ is involved throughout the whole Eastern world. Watch the developments of the Eastern question as one which holds in focus the most burning problems of European diplomacy. Note the rapid movements of European governments in taking possession of the territory of Africa, more than one-half of which is now in their

control. Watch the tightening grip of Christian civilization upon the African slave trade, which is the most hideous scandal of our century and is almost entirely the work of Arab Mohammedans. Take a broad outlook over the field where are gathered the momentous interests involved in this Mohammedan problem, and let us have the prayers of Christendom in the interests of Christ's kingdom and its blessed reign. Within the memory of living men the Christian church was praying for open doors in Asia and throughout the heathen world. To-day the church is sending her missionaries through a thousand avenues into the heart of heathendom. Let us have another triumph of prayer. If the church of Christ will march around this mighty fortress of the Mohammedan faith sounding her silver trumpets of prayer, it will not be long before, by some intervention of divine power, it will be overthrown. Let it be one of the watchwords of our church in these closing decades of the 19th century, that Christ, the Child of the Orient and the divine Heir of her tribes and kingdoms, shall possess His inheritance. The Moslem world shall be open to the gracious entrance of the Saviour and the triumphs of the gospel. The spell of twelve centuries shall be broken. That voice from the Arabian desert shall no longer say to the church of the living God—thus far and no further. The deep and sad delusion which shadows the intellectual and spiritual life of so many millions of our fellow-men shall be dispelled, and the blessed life-giving power of Christ's religion shall supplant the dead forms and the outworn creed of Islam.

